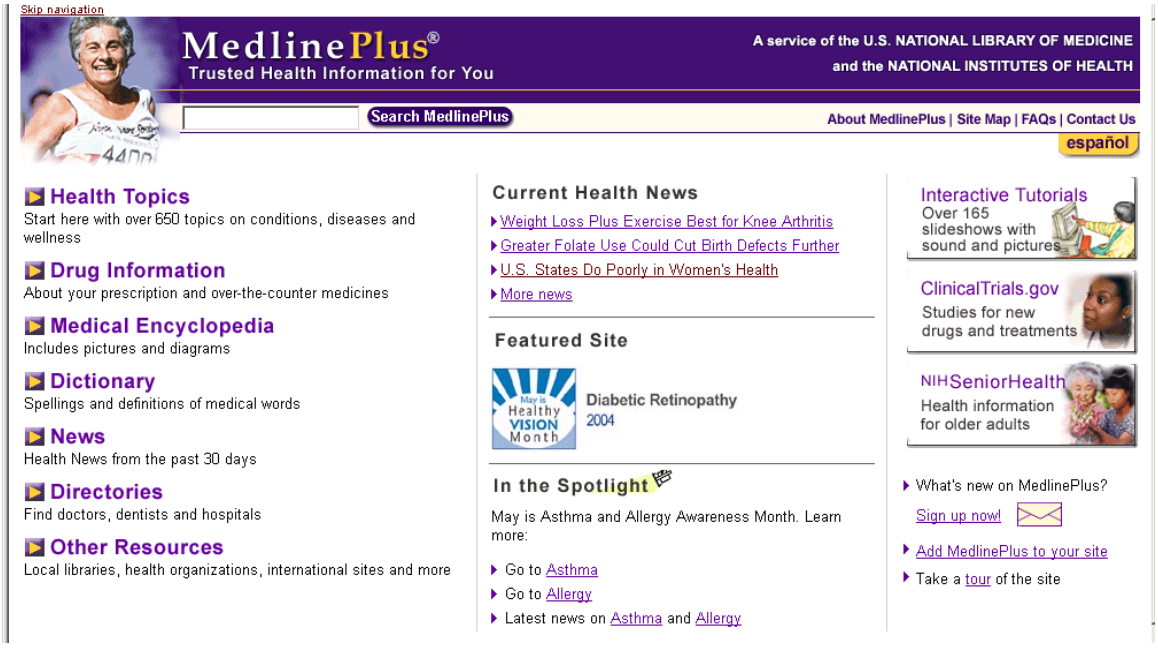
I. MedlinePlus

http://medlineplus.gov

MedlinePlus contains a wealth of health information from the world's largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine. Inside MedlinePlus is:

- Information on over 650 diseases and conditions
- Interactive tutorials on illnesses, procedures, and surgeries
- Easy to read health information, even for those with low vision
- Information on prescription and nonprescription drugs
- An illustrated medical encyclopedia
- The latest news on health information
- A medical dictionary
- Health and drug information in Spanish
- Lists of hospitals and physicians

MedlinePlus is updated daily. There is no advertising on this site, nor does MedlinePlus endorse any company or product. MedlinePlus changes it's featured site every other week.



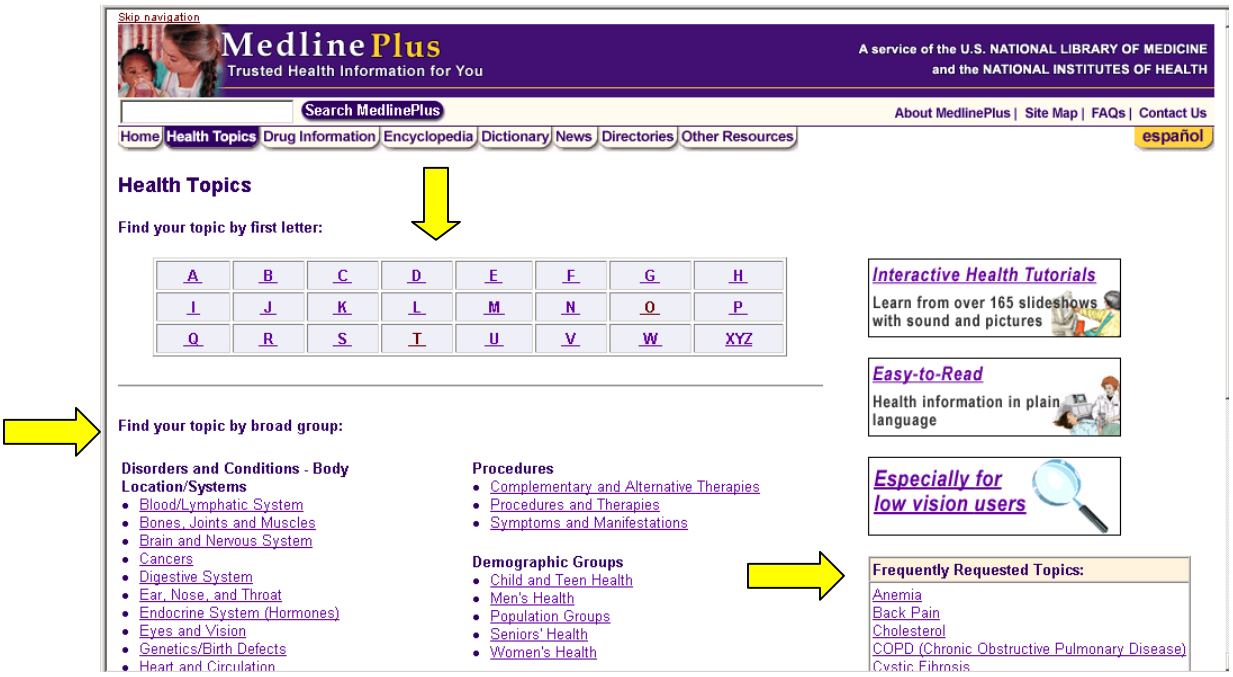
Health Topics

Researchers at the National Library of Medicine have found links to some of the best health web sites on the Internet. These are organized into Health Topics. There are over 650 Health Topics on MedlinePlus, and more are added all the time.

The web sites on the Internet have been chosen because:

- The content is high quality, authoritative, and accurate
- The source of the information is established and respectable
- The primary purpose of the website is educational
- Links are maintained
- Information on the site is current
- The site contains special features, such as graphs or diagrams
- The content is accessible to persons with disabilities

Health Topics can be searched a number of ways:

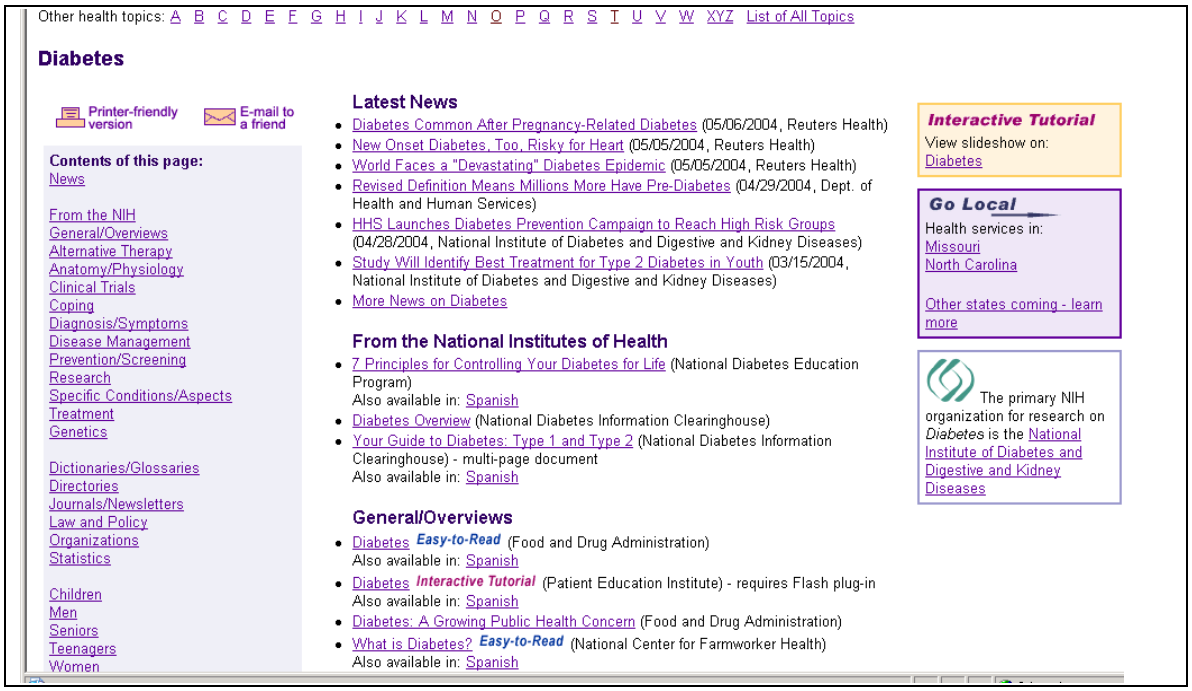


Alphabetical list – you can search by clicking on the first letter of a health topic, for example "Diabetes." You then scroll down the page to the list of topics until you reach Diabetes.

Broad Group – you can browse by clicking on broad group listings: for example "Cancers" or "Women's Health."

Frequently Requested Topics – if your health topic is a frequently requested one, you may find it in the topics on the lower right side of the screen, and selecting it will take you directly to that Health Topic page.

This is an example of a Health Topics page:



On the left column of the page, you can see the table of contents for that page. In the center of the page are the links to articles, and on the right column are links to items of particular interest.

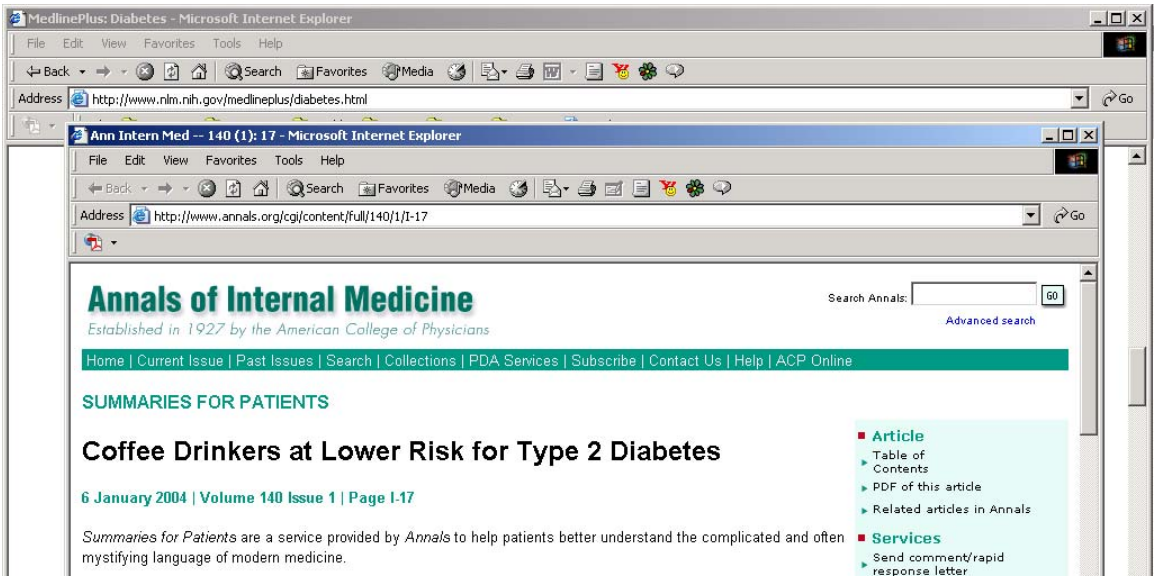
Table of Contents – The contents depends on the kinds of information available on the Internet. In the case of Diabetes, the contents list is fairly long.

Articles – When looking at the links in the center, you can see the source of each article, shown after the link. If the link is to an article that the source has defined as "Easy to Read," then the words Easy-to-Read or Fácil de Leer will appear after the article title. If the article is also in Spanish, it will say that as well. And if it is an "interactive tutorial," those words will appear after the article title. You can see each one of these in the example above.

Articles range from overviews to specific conditions related to the Health Topic. If there are recent news stories related to this health topic, they appear at the top of the list.

Special Items – on the right are three boxes with links inside. The first is a link to the Interactive Tutorial for this site. Interactive Tutorials are slide shows about health conditions and procedures. There will be more information on the Tutorials below. The second box contains links to local health resources in different states (more will be added soon). The third box is a link to the primary NIH Institute researching this health topic. The Institutes are excellent places to go for the latest research information on a condition.

Clicking on an article will bring the article up in a separate window. This makes it easier to go back to where you were last in MedlinePlus.



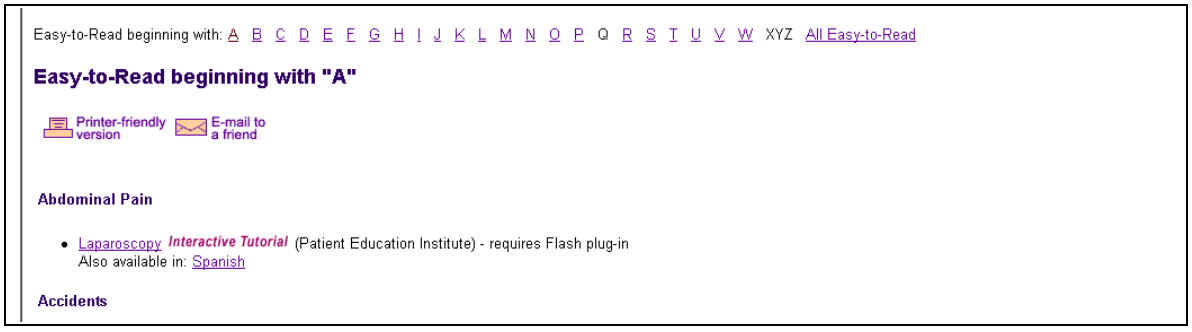
Easy-to-Read Pages

Easy-to-Read pages have been added to MedlinePlus to address the issue of low health literacy. Materials listed as easy-to-read or low literacy are designated as such by their creators. MedlinePlus does not determine the literacy level of Easy-to-Read materials.

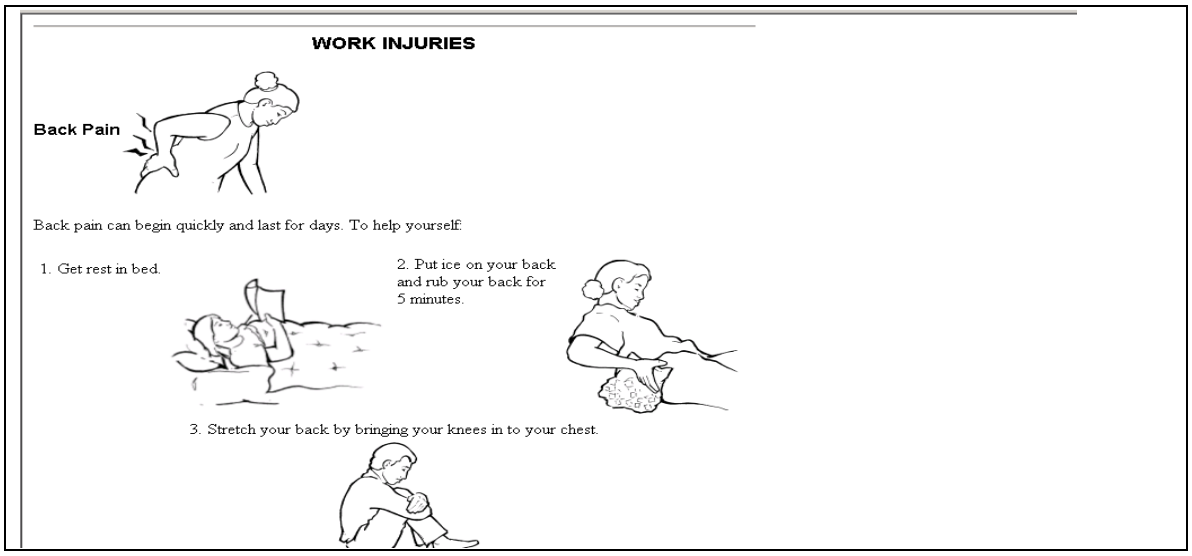
There are two ways to find the Easy-to-Read pages.

- Easy-to-Read links are designated on the individual Health Topics sites. After the title to the article, the words *Easy-to-Read* will appear.
- From the main Health Topics page, click on the Easy-to-Read logo on the right to get to the Easy-to-Read Health Topics page.

Easy-to-Read Health Topics page



Sample of Easy-to-Read page:



WORK INJURIES

Back Pain

Back pain can begin quickly and last for days. To help yourself:

1. Get rest in bed.

2. Put ice on your back and rub your back for 5 minutes.

3. Stretch your back by bringing your knees in to your chest.

If they are available in Spanish, this is listed on the health topics page, with the link.

The Easy-to-Read health topics page also includes all of the Interactive Tutorials, which are all designated Easy-to-Read.

Interactive Tutorials

Interactive Tutorials are a step-by-step slide show of the health topic. These are particularly popular for procedures and surgeries. They are written in easy-to-read English, and have large print for people with some vision loss. The Interactive Tutorials have a "read aloud" feature, which means that your computer will read everything on the screen unless you click the "mute" button.

There are two ways to find the Interactive Tutorials:

- Links to Interactive Tutorials are designated on the individual Health Topics sites in the upper right hand corner of the screen.
- From the main Health Topics page, click on the Interactive Health Tutorials logo on the right to get to the complete list of Interactive Tutorials to choose from.

Low Vision Users

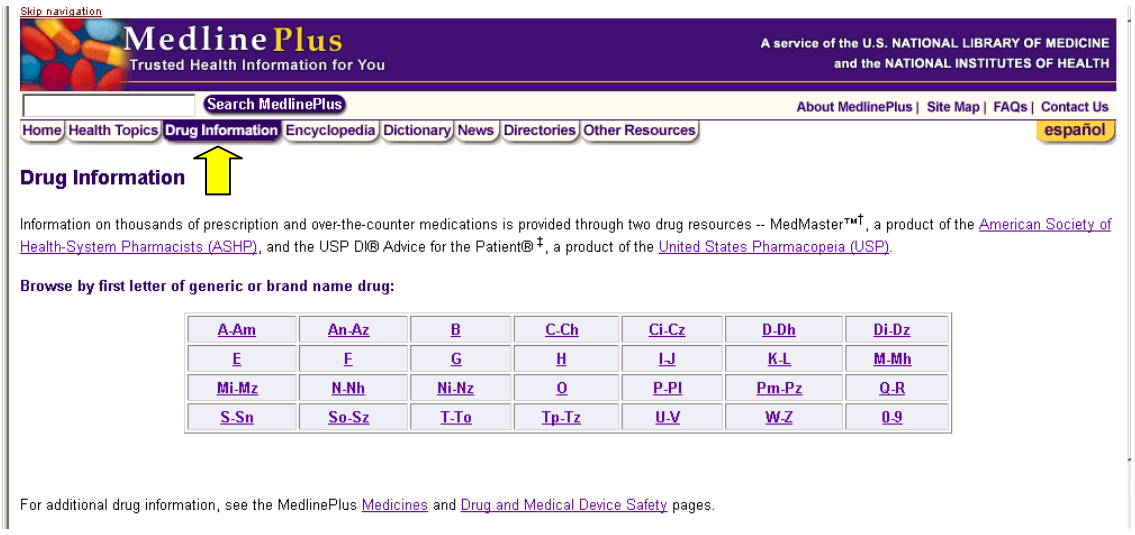
From the Health Topics main page, you can see a box on the right that says "Especially for Low Vision Users."

This will take you to a list of resources designed for people with vision problems. These resources are Interactive Tutorials (above) or articles from the web site NIHSeniorHealth. Both formats feature large fonts, easy-to-read language, and audio to listen to on each page.

Exercise: Find a glossary of terms about Parkinson's Disease.

Drug Information

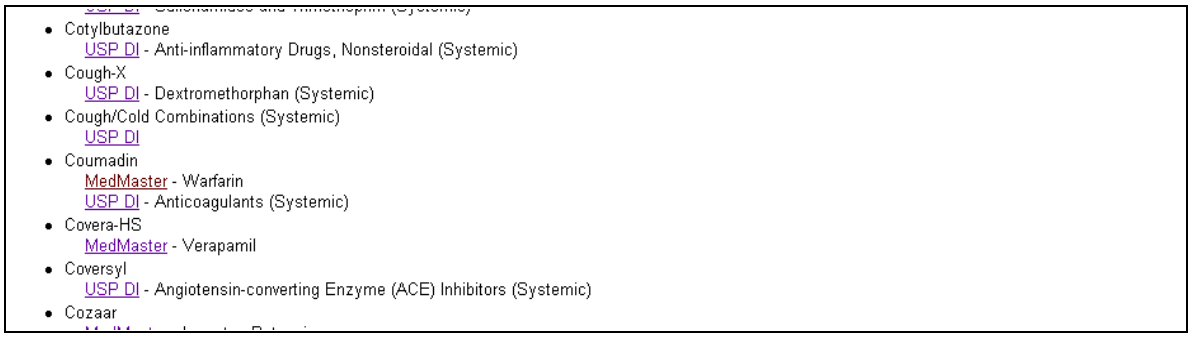
From the Home Page of MedlinePlus, you can click on Drug Information on the left side of the page. Notice that at the top of each MedlinePlus page is a series of tabs. These will take you to the different sections of MedlinePlus without going back to the home page. You can also click on one of these for Drug Information.



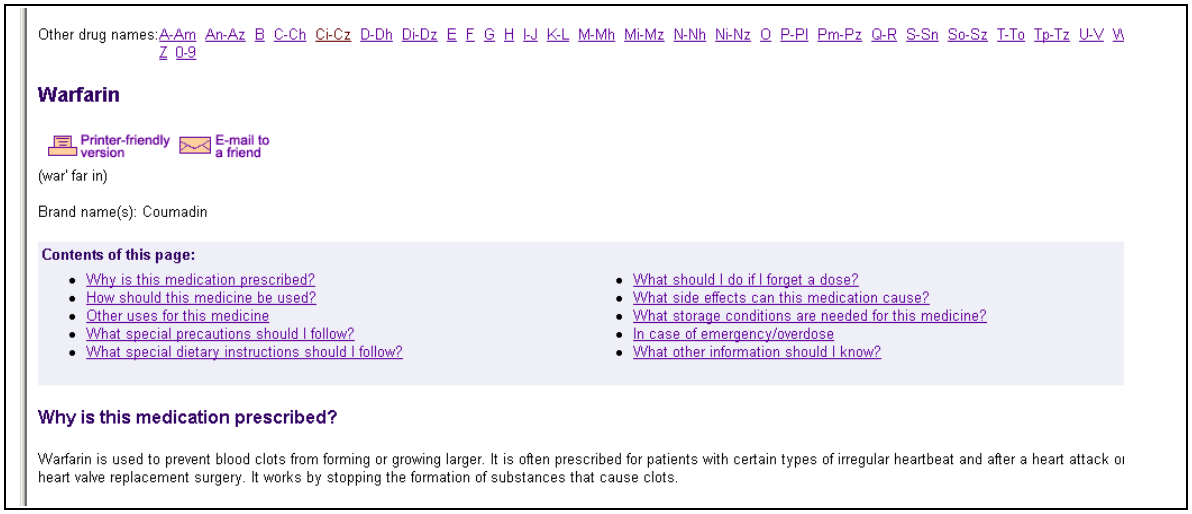
Information on drugs comes from one of two sources: MedMaster™ from the American Society of Health System Pharmacists, and the USP DI ®Advice for the Patient ® from the United States Pharmacopeia.

Drugs are listed by their generic and brand names, so they can be searched either way. Click on the first letter of the drug you would like to research.

If you click on "C" for "Coumadin," and then scroll down the screen, you will see this option:



You must select either MedMaster or USP DI. It is a good idea to compare them to get an idea of the different information on each one. Here is an example from MedMaster



Note how even though Coumadin was searched, the information came up under the generic name, Warfarin. MedMaster also lists the common brand names.

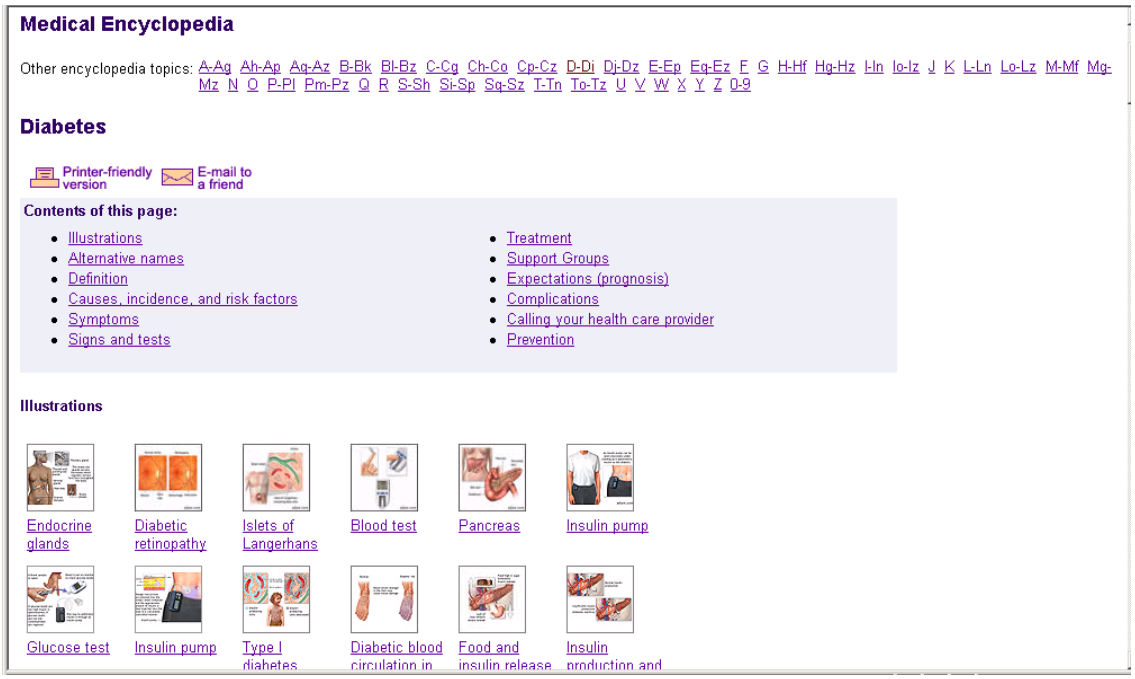
The contents of the page show that these articles give you basic patient information about the drugs, the kind you might get from your pharmacist.

Exercise: Take a moment to look up Lopressor. Look at both MedMaster and USP DI. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each.

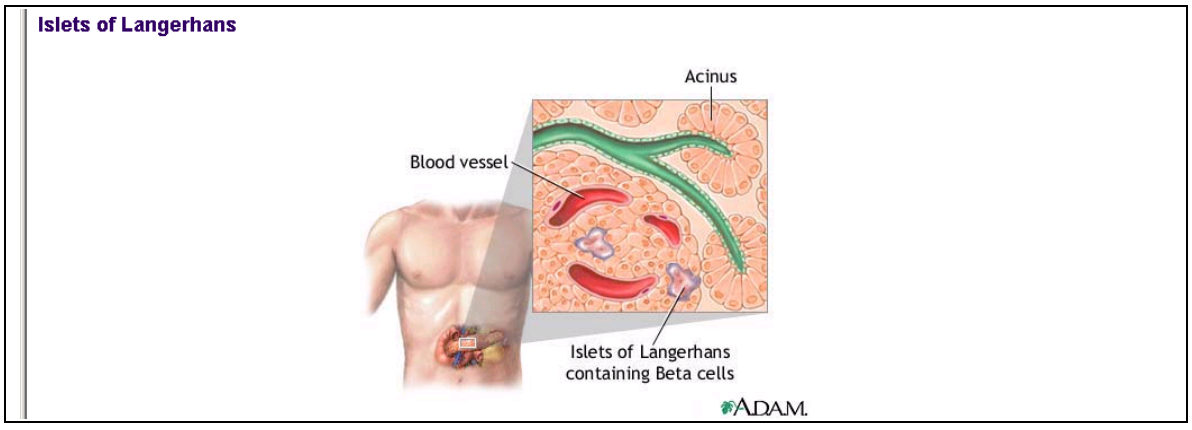
Medical Encyclopedia

By clicking on the tab at the top of the page, you can go to the medical encyclopedia. This is the *adam Health Illustrated Encyclopedia.* The encyclopedia contains over 4,000 articles, many of which are illustrated. Each article in the encyclopedia is in both English and Spanish.

Searching the encyclopedia is best done alphabetically. Below is the beginning of the page for Diabetes.



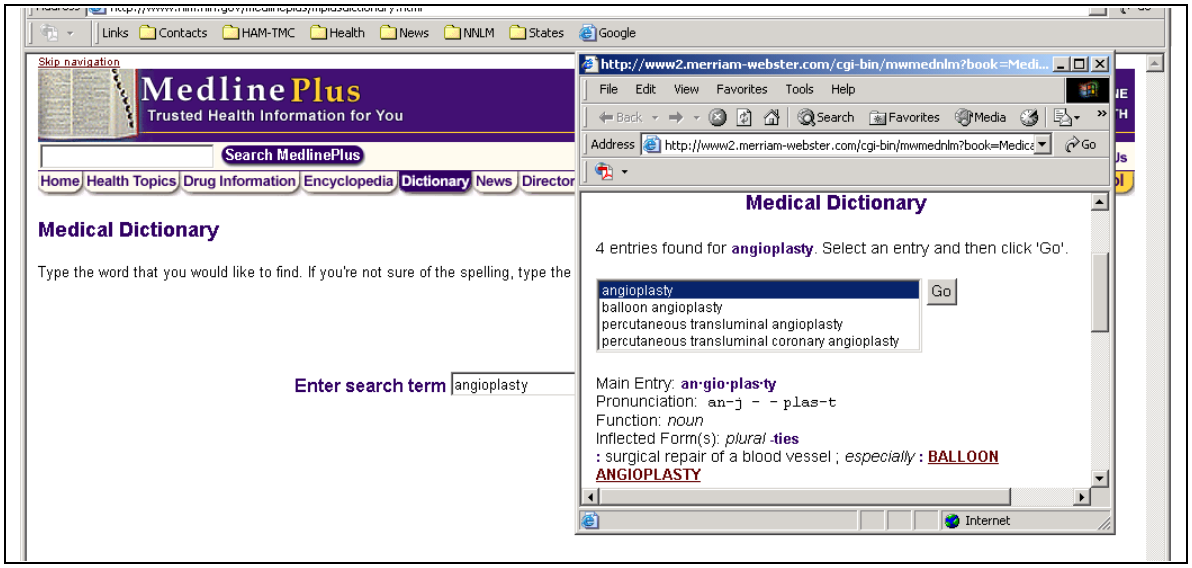
The first thing you see is a table of contents, showing that the article will have definitions, causes, symptoms, treatment and prevention. When available, the articles begin with illustrations. Clicking on one of the illustrations enlarges it.



Exercise: Compare the encyclopedia listings for "high blood pressure" and "hypertension." What is the difference in the information presented?

Dictionary

MedlinePlus provides an easy to use medical dictionary, provided by Merriam-Webster. Simply type a medical word into the search box and hit Enter, and you will get (in a separate screen), a clear definition of the word in layman's terms.



Exercise: Try this out on any medical term!

Current Health News

In the center top of the front page of MedlinePlus is the section called "Current Health News."

The National Library of Medicine has made arrangements with a number of news agencies, such as United Press International and Reuters, to make the current health news stories available for 30 days.

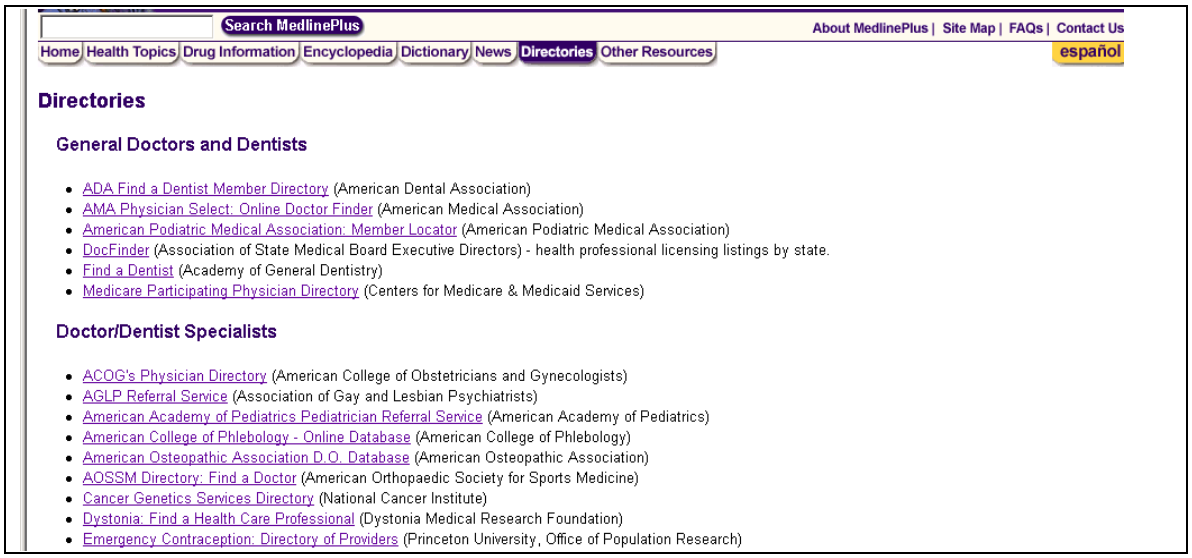
By clicking on the link that says "More News" or by clicking on the News tab on any page, you will go to a list of headlines of health stories. These are sorted by date. After each headline is the source of that news story.

The news can also be sorted by Health Topic. For people interested in a particular health condition, this can prove to be the more useful way of searching the news. Click where it says "Also see health news by topic."

Exercise: Look for a recent article on health issues that teenagers have.

Directories

MedlinePlus has links to the directories pages of websites. For example, if you are looking for a doctor, you can click on "AMA Physician Select: Online Doctor Finder" and you will go to the page of the American Medical Association website which has an online tool for finding a doctor in any part of the country.



On this page are directories for:

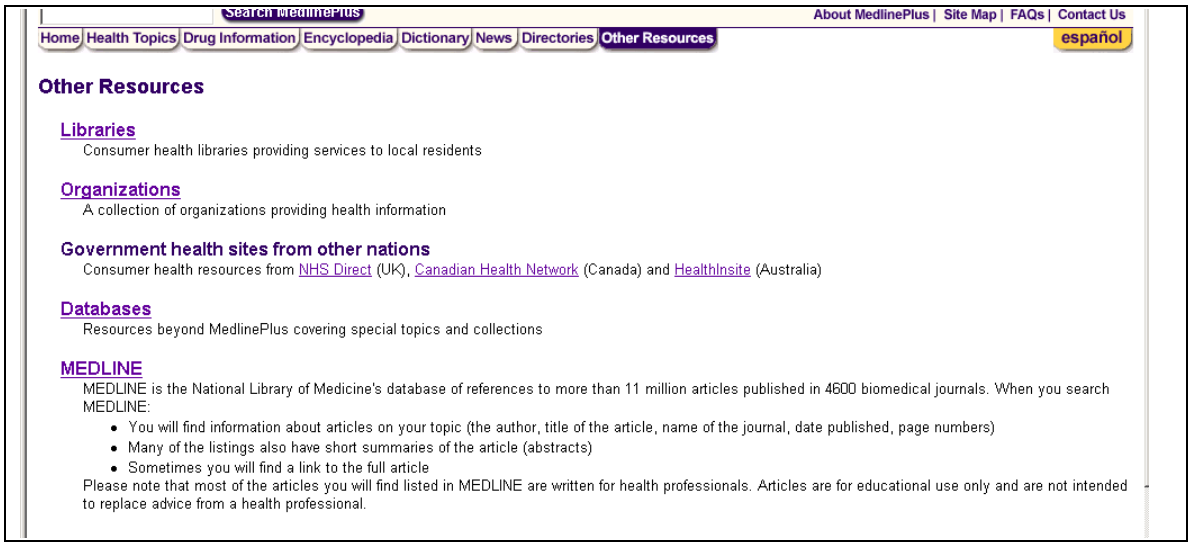
- Doctors and dentists
- Specialists
- Other kinds of health care providers (such as chiropractors and nurse-midwives)
- Hospitals and clinics
- Specialized hospitals and clinics
- Other health care facilities and services (such as hospice programs, or services for persons who visually impaired)

Some of these pages list whether or not the doctor is certified in their area of specialty. Others show whether or not there has been any disciplinary action taken against these doctors. Each link contains different information.

Exercise: Find a dermatologist near you. What does the final result sheet tell you about the dermatologist?

Other Resources

This page has links to other resources that are very helpful.



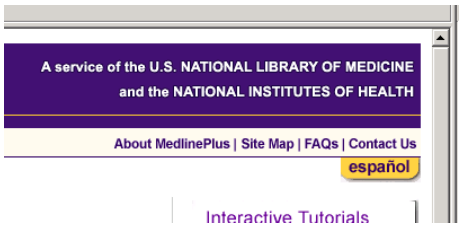
Some highlights are:

- A list of consumer health libraries in your state. These are libraries that have a strong health collection for use by the general public.
- A list of organizations that provide health information. This list is in alphabetical order. Suggestion for searching: start by clicking on "All Organizations" to get a complete list, then go to the "Find" utility on your browser (CTRL+F). Type in the health condition you are looking for (for example "Diabetes," and continue to click "Find Next" until you have found all of the listings for organizations with that word in their names.
- Government health sites from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Remember that treatments available in other countries may not be available in the U.S.
- DIRLINE (under the Databases link): This is a searchable database of organizations providing health information.
- *Multilingual Glossary of Technical and Popular Medical Terms in Eight European Languages* (under the Databases link): This glossary gives you the English word for medical terms in Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Exercise: How many organizations can you find in the organizations page for Alzheimer's? How many can you find through DIRLINE? Compare the resulting organizations.

En español
http://medlineplus.gov/spanish/

MedlinePlus is also available in Spanish. By clicking on the "español" link in the upper right hand corner of the page, you can see what MedlinePlus has in Spanish.



This is what the home page looks like:

You can see that there is information under the categories of

- Health Topics (Temas de Salud)
- Drug Information (Medicinas)
- Medical Encyclopedia (Enciclopedia Médica)
- Interactive tutorials (Tutoriales Interactivos)
- Health News (Noticias de Salud)

There is also a "Página Recomendada" on the home page.

Temas de Salud: The health topics pages are very similar to the English version, but the articles can be different. Some articles are the same, and these

have "Tabién está disponible en: ingles" written after the title (on the English pages, they say "also available in: Spanish")

Enciclopedia Médica: Each one of the thousands of articles in the Medical Encyclopedia is available Spanish as well as English. By clicking on the "espanol" or "English" link in the upper right had corner, you are able to toggle back and forth between the Spanish and English articles.

Medicinas: Information on over 200 drugs is available on the Medicinas page. Not every drug on the English site is available in Spanish. However, more information in Spanish is being added all the time.

Interactive Tutorials: All of the Interactive Tutorials are available in Spanish and English.

Noticias: The news agency for the Spanish health news is Healthday. Spanish language health news stories are available for 90 days.

Exercise: Is there any information on the drug "Coumadin" in Spanish?

Search Box

If the health information for which you are searching is not a Health Topic, or if is a combination of different health topics, the best way to find it might be the search box.

On every MedlinePlus page there is a search box:

By typing search terms in this box, MedlinePlus looks for those terms in every category that the site has. Results are displayed by category (such as health topic, current news, encyclopedia, etc.)

Example: articles on "Breast Engorgement" cannot be found in either the encyclopedia or health topics under the term "breast engorgement." However, typing the words in the search box will find the articles that have information on breast engorgement within the article.

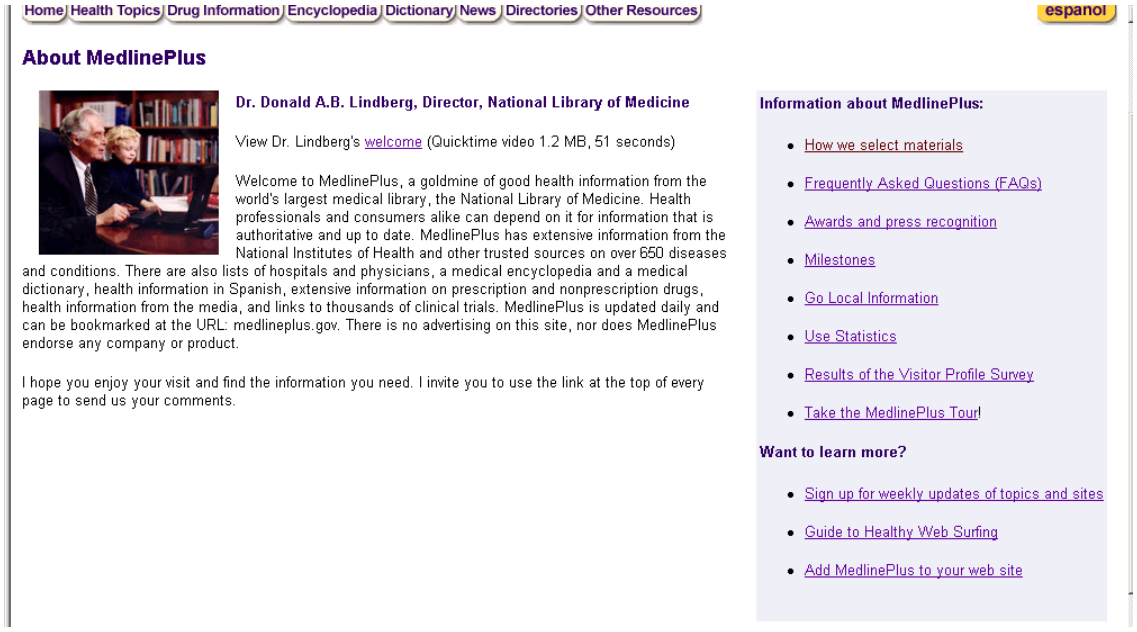
On the left you can see an outline of all the places searched and the number of "hits" found with the words "Breast" and "Engorgement". 30 articles were found under Breast Feeding, and 145 articles were found in the Medical Encyclopedia. The top four articles in each area are shown as links, and the rest can be found by clicking the "see all results" link.

Exercise: Find an article on teen suicide.

About MedlinePlus

On the top right had corner of the screen is a link that says "About MedlinePlus."

This link takes you to a welcome page from Dr. Donald Lindberg, the Director of the National Library of Medicine.



On the right side of the page are some very helpful links. The first one, "How we select materials," describes in greater detail the criteria by which web sites are selected to be part of MedlinePlus.

The "Awards and press recognition" link shows you some of the accolades that MedlinePlus has received in the press. *PC World* called MedlinePlus the "gold standard" for free health information on the Internet!

The "Guide to Healthy Web Surfing" is a very useful guide about how to evaluate the health information that you find on the Internet.

If you would like to receive the headlines of the current news by e-mail, or updates on the latest changes to MedlinePlus, click on "sign up for weekly updates." This will give you a variety of e-mail lists to choose from.

MedlinePlus is a service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health.